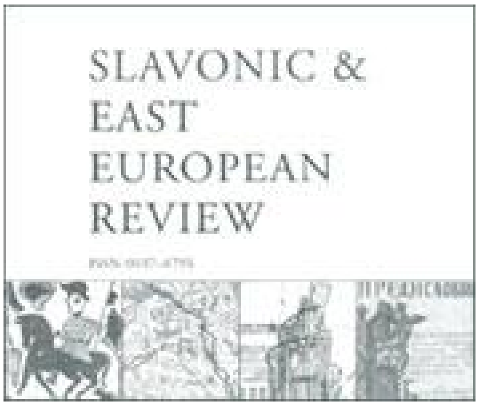


The Mongolian Capture of Kiev: The Two Dates

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MARGINALIA

The Mongolian Capture of Kiev: The Two Dates

ALEXANDER V. MAIOROV

The Mongolian capture of Kiev in 1240 became one of the most important events of the Western campaign of Batu Khan's army. This tragic story has been described in nearly every old Russian Chronicle. There are a great many variations in the details of the siege and storming of the capital of ancient Rus′, including conflicting dates for the fall of Kiev. Meanwhile, scholars have also presented different views on this issue. This article, therefore, will examine the dates cited in the Russian Chronicles, as well as evidence in West European sources, in order to determine the precise date of this event.

There is currently no known copy of the Ipatiev Chronicle which provides the most detailed and earliest account of the capture of Kiev by the troops of Batu Khan, and no indication that may help to determine the correct date of this event. Nor does the Novgorod I Chronicle (both in its older and newer versions) contain the date of the fall of Kiev.

Among the surviving records of the Mongol invasion of Rus′, only the Laurentian Chronicle reports the date of the fall of Kiev: 'This malice happened before Christmas, on St Nicholas day.'[1] St Nicholas's day — 6 December, the memory day of the highly revered Russian St Nicholas of Myra, or the Wonderworker — is referred to as the date of the fall of Kiev in the chronicles that were based on the Laurentian Chronicle or, more precisely, as reflected in Rostov chronicle writing of the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The Moscow Academy copy of the Suzdal

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[1] *Lavrent′evskaia letopis′* (Laurentian chronicle), ed. E. F. Karsky, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 1997, vol. 1, col. 470.

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Chronicle reports a double date — according to the church calendar and the astronomical calendar: 'The Tatars seized Kiev on 6 December, the memory day of the Holy Father Nicholas.'[2] A chronicler from Vladimir used only the astronomical date of the fall of Kiev ('on the 6th day of the month of December'),[3] while the Novgorod chronicles indicate a church calendar date ('on St Nicholas's day').[4] Most Russian chronicles of the late fifteenth to sixteenth centuries provide the same dates.[5]

Chronicles that go back to the Pskov chronicle of the turn of the 1460s–70s contain different dating for the fall of Kiev. They include Avraamka's Chronicle from Western Rus′, the Pskov chronicles and the Bolshakov Chronicle from Novgorod, which is close to Avraamka's Chronicle. These sources specify the date when the siege began, its duration and the date when Kiev fell. The best readable text is in Avraamka's Chronicle and the Pskov III Chronicle: 'The Tatars came to Kiev on September 5, stayed for 10 weeks and 4 days and took it on November 19, on Monday.'[6]

It is sometimes thought that the Supraśl Chronicle (which derived from an earlier Belarusian-Lithuanian Chronicle of 1446) mediated information on the ten-week siege of Kiev, giving the fall of the city on 19 November. N. G.

[2] Ibid., col. 523.

[3] *Vladimirskii letopisets* (Chronicler from Vladimir), ed. M. N. Tikhomirov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2009, vol. 30, p. 90.

[4] *Sofiiskaia Pervaia letopis′* (Sofia First Chronicle), eds S. N. Kisterev and L. A. Timoshina, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 6/1, col. 302; *Novgorodskaia Karamzinskaia letopis′* (Karamzinskaia Novgorodian Chronicle), ed. A. G. Bobrov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, St Petersburg, 2002, vol. 42, pp. 116–17; *Novgorodskaia Chetvertaia letopis′* (Fourth Novgorodian Chronicle), eds F. I. Pokrovsky and A. A. Shakhmatov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 4/1, p. 227.

[5] *Voskresenskaia letopis′* (Voskresenskii Chronicle), eds Ia. I. Berednikov and A. F. Bychkov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 7, p. 145; *Nikonovskaia letopis′* (Nikonian Chronicle), ed. A. F. Bychkov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 10, p. 117; *Rogozhskii letopisets* (Rogozhskii Chronicler), ed. N. P. Likhachev, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 15, col. 375; *Simeonovskaia letopis′* (Simeonian Chronicle), ed. A. E. Presniakov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2007, vol. 18, p. 93; *Moskovskii letopisnyi svod kontsa XV veka* (Moscow Chronicles of the End of the 15th Century), ed. M. N. Tikhomirov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2004, vol. 25, p. 131; *Vologodsko-Permskaia letopis′* (Vologodsko-Permian Chronicle), ed. M. N. Tikhomirov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2006, vol. 26, p. 76.

[6] *Letopis′ Avraamki* (Avraamka's Chronicle), eds A. F. Bychkov and K. N. Bestushev-Riumin, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 16, col. 51; *Pskovskaia III letopis′* (Pskov III Chronicle), ed. A. N. Nasonov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2003, vol. 5/2, p. 81. See also, *Pskovskaia I letopis′* (Pskov I Chronicle), ed. A. N. Nasonov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2003, vol. 5/1, p. 12; E. L. Koniavskaia (ed.), 'Novgorodskaia letopis′ XVI v. iz sobraniia T. F. Bol′shakova', in *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik*, St Petersburg, 2005, vol. 10 (20), p. 354.

Berezhkov, among others, adhered to this view: 'The Novgorod dating of this event [the fall of Kiev] is represented in the Pskov III Chronicle, Avraamka's Chronicle and the Supraśl Chronicle.'[7] Berezhkov must have relied upon a source analysis made by M. S. Hrushevs'ky in 1891.[8] It is an archaic error that still recurs in the work of contemporary scholars.[9]

The known copies of the Supraśl Chronicle describe the storming of Kiev and the date of its fall in a way that is reminiscent of the account in the chronicles from St Sophia's cathedral in Novgorod: 'Kiev was taken on St Nicholas day.'[10] The edition to which Hrushevs'ky, Berezhkov and others refer, however, contains sources that have nothing to do with the Supraśl Chronicle. The collection published in 1836 under the title, *The Supraśl Chronicle*,[11] contains the text of the Short Novgorod Chronicle which is included in a handwritten collection from the early sixteenth century.[12] In general, the Short Chronicle is similar to the Novgorod IV Chronicle, although it occasionally replicates reports from Avraamka's Chronicle. When publishing the collection, M. A. Obolensky brought inconsistencies into line with the manuscript of the 1470s–80s, which contains a version of the Novgorod Chronicle that is close to Avraamka's Chronicle.[13]

Thus, the reports about the ten-week siege of Kiev by Batu Khan's troops and the capture of the city on 19 November 1240 are cited only in chronicles that go back to the Pskov Chronicle from the late 1460s to the early 1470s.

[7] N. G. Berezhkov, *Khronologiia russkogo letopisaniia*, Moscow, 1963, p. 111.

[8] See M. S. Hrushevskii, *Ocherk istorii Kievskoi zemli ot smerti Iaroslava do kontsa XIV stoletiia*, Kiev, 1891, pp. 424–25, n. 3. See also, M. S. Hrushev'skyi, *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, Kiev, 1992, vol. 2, p. 251, n. 5.

[9] See V. I. Staviskii, 'O dvukh datakh shturma Kieva v 1240 g. po russkim letopisiam', in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury Instituta russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom) Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk*, Leningrad, 1990, vol. 43, pp. 282–90 (p. 284); D. G. Khrustalev, *Rus′: ot nashestviia do 'iga'. 30–40 gg. XIII v.,* St Petersburg, 2004, p. 190.

[10] *Suprasl′skaia letopis′* (Supraśl Chronicle), eds S. L. Ptashitsky and A. A. Shakhmatov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 2008, vol. 17, col. 25; *Suprasl′skaia letopis′* (Supraśl Chronicle), ed. N. N. Ulashchik, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 1980, vol. 35, p. 44.

[11] *Suprasl′skaia rukopis′, soderzhashchaia Novgorodskuiu i Kievskuiu sokrashchennye letopisi*, ed. M. A. Obolensky, Moscow, 1836.

[12] Moscow, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov, f. 181, op. 1, ch. 1, no. 21/26.

[13] Moscow, *Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii musei, Sinodal′noe sobranie*, no. 154. See A. N. Nasonov, 'Vvedenie', in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 5/1, pp. 9–44 (pp. 12–13); N. N. Ulashchik, 'Predislovie', in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 35, pp. 3–18 (p. 10); O. L. Novikova, 'K istorii izucheniia Suprasl′skogo letopisnogo sbornika pervoi treti XIX v.', in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, St Petersburg, 1996, vol. 50, pp. 384–86.

Which of the chronicle dates is the date when Kiev fell?

Many historians accept the complete date, given in the Pskov chronicles, as the most probable date of the siege and capture of Kiev. V. T. Pashuto prefers this date.[14] N. G. Berezhkov leans towards the same view: 'The second hypothesis [19 November] seems to be more convincing, because the date when Kiev fell is preceded by the date when the Tatars approached the city and the duration of the siege. All dating elements are consistent with each other, just as the elements of the full date when Kiev fell (the year, the day of the month, the day of the week).'[15] As 19 November 1240 falls on a Monday — O. M. Rapov argues — the record that fixed this date must have been 'entered immediately after the event and can be trusted'.[16]

V. I. Staviskii made a special search of the sources in order to determine the exact date of the fall of Kiev. He concludes that the dating that goes back to the Pskov chronicles 'is true and the oldest one', as it 'goes back to *The Tale about the Invasion of the Rusian Land by Batu Khan* in 1237–41, which was attached to the 1239 Kiev chronicle'. The copy of this tale, according to Staviskii, appeared in Novgorod in spring 1251, when Metropolitan Kirill arrived. The tale was included in the Novgorod chronicles, which were used when the Pskov chronicle was compiled in the mid-fifteenth century.[17]

A number of contemporary studies recognize 19 November 1240 as the most probable date of the fall of Kiev.[18] Often both dates given in the chronicles in respect of the siege and fall of Kiev are recognized as equally trustworthy and a conclusion drawn that the months-long siege of the South Rus′ capital lasted from 5 September to 6 December.[19]

As far as one can judge, the original South Rus′ text of *The Tale about the Invasion by Batu Khan* did not contain any dates or other chronological evidence. The Ipatiev Chronicle does not specify any dates

[14] V. T. Pashuto, *Geroicheskaia bor′ba russkogo naroda za nezavisimost′ (XIII v.)*, Moscow, 1955, p. 157; idem, *Vneshniaia politika Drevnei Rusi*, Moscow, 1968, p. 285.

[15] Berezhkov, *Khronologiia*, p. 111.

[16] O. M. Rapov, 'Russkie goroda i mongol′skoe nashestvie', in *Kulikovskaia bitva v istorii i kul′ture nashei Rodiny*, ed. B. A. Rybakov, Moscow, 1983, pp. 77–89 (p. 87).

[17] Staviskii, 'O dvukh datakh', p. 290.

[18] See M. Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1146–1246*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 356; L. V. Alekseev, *Zapadnye zemli domongol′skoi Rusi: Ocherki istorii, arkheologii, kul′tury*, Moscow, 2006, vol. 2, p. 30; Khrustalev, *Rus′*, p. 190; I. Izmailov, 'Pokhody v Vostochnuiu Evropu 1223–1240 gg.', in *Istoriia tatar s drevneishikh vremen. T. 3: Ulus Dzhuchi (Zolotaia Orda)*, Kazan′, 2009, pp. 153–61 (p. 160).

[19] See Rapov, 'Russkie goroda', p. 87; R. P. Khrapachevsky, *Voennaia derzhava Chingiskhana*, Moscow, 2005, p. 386; idem, *Armiia mongolov perioda zavoevaniia Drevnei Rusi*, Moscow, 2011, pp. 234–35; R. Iu. Pochekaev, *Batyi. Khan, kotoryi ne byl khanom*, Moscow and St Petersburg, 2007, p. 133; A. Iu. Karpov, *Batyi*, Moscow, 2011, pp. 99–100.

in the descriptions of the siege and the capture of Kozelsk, Pereiaslavl′, Chernigov, Volodymir Volynsky, Halych and other South Rus′ cities, or of the Tatar conquest of North-Eastern Rus′ and their campaign in Central Europe. Besides, according to the Ipatiev Chronicle, which gives the fullest and the most detailed description of the siege and the capture of Kiev, the battle for the capital of Rus′ could not have taken so long — from 5 September to 19 November, i.e. two and a half months. Rather, it lasted only several days.

More in line with the version of the Ipatiev Chronicle is the report about the capture of Kiev made by Rashid-ad-Din Hamadani — the official historian of the Ilkhanate in the early fourteenth century. He renders the Mongolian version of the conquest of Rus′:

> In the fall of khulugine-il, the year of the mouse, which corresponds to the months of 637 AH (1239 AD) […] Prince Batu with his brothers and princes Kadan, Buri and Buchek marched into the land of the Rusians and the people of Black Caps. In nine days they took the great Rusian city of Manker Kan.[20]

The toponym *Manker Kan* or *Mankerman* is the old Turkic name of Kiev — *Man Kermen*.[21] This name (in the form *Magraman*) was known in Western Europe. The Venetian diplomat Ambrogio Contarini, who visited Kiev in May 1474, used this name in the account of his travel to Persia. [22]

In our opinion, the original text of *The Tale about the Invasion of Batu Khan* did not contain any calendar references to the siege and the capture of Kiev. All attempts to time these events to St Nicholas's day or other dates were made later, when in different parts of Rus′ different ideas existed about the time and the circumstances of the fall of Kiev. M. S. Hrushevs'ky came to the same conclusion. In his reconstruction of the original text of the chronicle account of the Batu's slaughter, he excluded any evidence of St Nicholas's day as the date of the capture of Kiev by the Tatars.[23]

[20] Rashid ad-Din, *Sbornik letopisei*, vol. 2, trans. iu. P. Verhovsky, ed. I. P. Petrushevsky, Moscow and Leningrad, 1960, pp. 44–45. See also, V. G. Tizengauzen (ed.), *Sbornik materialov, otnosiashchikhsia k istorii Zolotoi Ordy*, vol. 2, Moscow and Leningrad, 1941, p. 37. See also, A. V. Maiorov, 'Zavoevanie Batyem Iuzhnoi Rusi: K interpretatsii odnogo izvestiia Rashid ad-Dina', *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, 2015, 1, pp. 182–94.

[21] See *Sravnitel′no-istoricheskaia grammatika tiurkskikh iazykov: Pratiurkskii iazyk-osnova. Kartina mira pratiurkskogo etnosa po dannym iazyka*, eds E. R. Tenishev and A. V. Dybo, Moscow, 2006, p. 445.

[22] *Barbaro i Kontarini o Rossii: K istorii ital′iansko-russkikh sviazei v XV v.*, trans. E. Ch. Skrzhinskaia, Leningrad, 1971, p. 236, n. 7.

[23] See M. S. Hrushevs'ky, *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury*, Kiev, 1993, vol. 3, pp. 186–87.

Nevertheless, the issue of the trustworthiness of the dates of the capture of Kiev by the Mongols in the chronicles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is yet to be solved. Some contemporary scholars refuse even to approach it. 'It is hard to say, which of these data are more trustworthy', P. P. Tolochko writes about various versions of the dating of the fall of Kiev.[24] According to N. F. Kotliar, 'there is no possibility to determine the real chronology of the siege and the storm of Rus′ capital by Batu's hordes'.[25] However, another possibility exists.

More or less distinct evidence of the time of the capture of Kiev by the Mongols can be found in a Hungarian source. Compiled at the time of the events, this source has been under-investigated by the historians of Rus′.

Matthew of Paris in his mid-thirteenth-century Great Chronicle cites a letter from a certain Hungarian bishop to an unnamed bishop of Paris (possibly Guillaume III d'Auvergne). Before telling a legendary history of the origin of the Tatars, which the Hungarians had heard from captive Tatar scouts, the author reports a few interesting details regarding the time and the circumstances of the Tatars' stay in Rus′ before they attacked Hungary:

> I reply to you about the Tatars, that they came as far as the border of Hungary in five days' march and approached the river that is called Deinphir, which they had been unable to cross in summer. Wishing to wait until winter, they sent forward a few scouts into Rusia. Two of them were seized and sent to the king of Hungary, and I had them under custody…[26]

Publishers usually date the document to 1241,[27] sometimes to 1242.[28] The full date suggested by H. R. Luard — 10 April 1242 — is the most questionable. Unsupported by any other source, it is also inconsistent with the contents of the message. This seems to be the result of some technical mistake.[29]

[24] P. P. Tolochko, *Kochevye narody stepei i Kievskaia Rus′*, St Petersburg, 2003, p. 143.

[25] N. F. Kotliar, 'Kommentarii', in *Galitsko-Volynskaia letopis′: Tekst. Kommentarii. Issledovanie*, ed. N. F. Kotliar, St Petersburg, 2005, p. 254.

[26] *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, London, 1882, vol. 6 (Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores, vol. 57/6), p. 75.

[27] *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, ed. Gy. Fejér. Budae, 1829, vol. 4/1, pp. 232–35 (1241); C. Ja. Erben, 'Regesta diplomatica nec non epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae, pars I', in *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, 1854, Folge 5, Bd. 8, p. 473, nr. 1018 (March 1241).

[28] *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. 6, p. 75 (10 April 1242).

[29] See G. A. Bezzola, *Die Mongolen in abendländischer Sicht (1220–1270). Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Völkerbegegnungen*, Bern and Munich, 1974, p. 54, n. 198; A. Klopprogge,

Another version of the same message survives in English medieval chronicles, in the Annals of Waverley (a monastery near Farnham, Surrey), completed in the late thirteenth century.

This manuscript dates the message to 1239. It is a fuller and, in the opinion of modern researchers, a 'more reliable' version than that of Matthew of Paris.[30] The Waverley manuscript reads:

> I am writing to you about the Tatars, that they came as far as the border of Hungary in 5 days' march. When they reached the Damaii River, which they had been unable to cross in summer, they wished to wait until winter in order to be able to cross the aforementioned river over the ice. They retreated by a good 20 days' march and are waiting for winter there...[31]

H. R. Luard, the publisher of both sources, believed that the addressee of both messages was the bishop of Paris. However, Matthew of Paris only refers to the bishop in his commentary. The letter does not contain any evidence of the addressee.[32] The Annals of Waverley reproduce the letter without an inscription; the main body of the document mentions a certain archdeacon in Paris as the addressee.[33]

Which of the two letter versions is closer to the original?

If the compilers of the Annals of Waverley used the earlier written Great Chronicle along with other sources, preference should be given to Matthew of Paris's version. However, Matthew appears to have given little importance to the document, as he included it without a date in the appendix to the main narrative. The compilers of the Annals of Waverley seem to have taken the letter more seriously.

The comparison of the two texts shows that the letter in the Annals of Waverley, in addition to being dated differently, contains a number of details that are not found in Matthew of Paris's version. For example, the Tatar rulers' names differ. While the Waverley manuscript calls the Tatar king *Churcitan*, Matthew of Paris names him *Zingiton*. The name *Churcitan* corresponds to *Gurgutam* of Friar Julian and *Curthican* (cf. *Churi-can*) in the report of the Rusian archbishop Peter at the Council of

Ursprung und Ausprägung des abendländischen Mongolenbildes im 13. Jahrhundert. Ein Versuch zur Ideengeschichte des Mittelalters, Wiesbaden, 1993, p. 163, n. 70.

[30] Bezzola, *Die Mongolen*, p. 53, n. 196; Klopprogge, *Ursprung*, p. 162, n. 61.

[31] *Annales monasterii de Waverleia*, ed. H. R. Luard, in *Annales monastici*, London, 1865, vol. 2 (Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores, vol. 36/2), p. 325.

[32] *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. 6, p. 75.

[33] *Annales monasterii de Waverleia*, p. 325.

Lion in 1245.[34] It possibly refers to Genghis Khan's son Jochi or to the title *Gur Chan* (a great ruler), which corresponds to the Latin *rex regum*. The name *Zingiton* used by Matthew of Paris (also mentioned in Henry Raspe's letter)[35] is more consistent with the name Genghis Khan.[36]

Nevertheless, it is clear that both names are derived from authentic Mongolian names or titles. It is unlikely that they had been known in France before the arrival of the Hungarian bishop's letter. The difference between the names cannot be explained by the interference of later editors, as both the Great Chronicle and the Annals of Waverley have survived in the manuscripts of the thirteenth century. The most likely assumption is that there were several copies of the Hungarian bishop's letter to Paris.

Matthew of Paris edited the copy in his possession and, in particular, changed the name of the Tatar king, bringing it into line with the name in Henry Raspe's letter, which immediately follows the Hungarian bishop's letter in the Great Chronicle. This assumption is even more probable since in both cases the name *Zingiton* is used in the same context about the marking of infants. In whatever land the Mongols came to, they killed all the people except for infants 'on whom *Zingiton*, translated as the "Tsar of the tsars", their sovereign, affixes his glowing seal onto their faces' (the Hungarian bishop's letter), or 'whom their tsar, named *Zingiton*, brands on the forehead' (Henry Raspe's letter).[37]

D. Sinor believes that the author of the letter to Paris was Bishop Stephen of Vác.[38] H. Göckenjan expresses doubts with regard to this possibility without providing any substantial proof.[39] The known facts of Stephen's biography (István Bancsa, d. 1270) do not contradict Sinor's suggestion. In 1238–40 Stephen was the chancellor of King Béla IV and the provost of Titel. He became the bishop of Vác at the turn of 1240–41 (he is first mentioned as bishop on 18 May 1241), and Béla sent him to Rome in this capacity to conduct negotiations with the emperor and the pope for assistance against the Tatars. In 1243, Stephen became the archbishop of Esztergom and the primate of Hungary. In December 1251 he was the first

[34] H. Dörrie, 'Drei Texte zur Geschichte der Ungarn und Mongolen. Die Missionsreisen des fr. Julian OP. ins Uralgebiet (1234/5) und nach Russland (1237) und der Bericht des Erzbischofs Peter über die Tartaren', *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, 1956, 6, pp. 125–202 (pp. 167, 189).

[35] *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. 6, p. 77.

[36] See Klopprogge, *Ursprung*, pp. 162–63.

[37] *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. 6, pp. 75, 77.

[38] D. Sinor, 'Un voyageur du treizieme siècle: le Dominicain Julien de Hongrie', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 14, 1952, 3, pp. 589–602 (p. 599).

[39] H. Göckenjan and J. R. Sweeney, *Der Mongolensturm. Berichte von Augenzeugen und Zeitgenossen, 1235–1250*, Graz, Vienna and Cologne, 1985, p. 273 sq. (cf p. 200, n. 81).

among the Catholic hierarchs of Hungarian origin to become the cardinal (the cardinal-bishop of Palestrina). He participated many times in the papal election.[40]

As a royal chancellor, Stephen Bancsa could obtain necessary information about the approach of the Mongols to the Hungarian borders and personally question the captive Mongolian scouts delivered to the king.

Most researchers identify the river *Deinphir* (as spelt by Matthew of Paris) as the Dnieper.[41] Both letter versions support this identification. Unable to force a crossing over the deep river, the Tatars delayed until the winter frost, when a strong sheet of ice would cover it, and withdrew to the East at a distance of twenty days' march. Similarly, the following year, when the Tatars were already in Hungary, they waited for the winter frost so that they could cross the Danube over the ice.

If the Hungarian bishop's letter was about the crossing of the Dnieper that the Mongols were to undertake, this document must have been written before the siege and the storming of Kiev. This was the conclusion made by M. S. Hrushevs'ky. The letter was written before the Tatars approached the Hungarian border and described the situation before they started crossing the frozen Dnieper.[42] Contemporary researchers date the document to 1239 or, preferably, 1240.[43] In any event, the situation described in the letter and, therefore, the letter itself, came into being when the West was not yet filled with horror at the Mongolian invasion, but was watching the approaching aggressors with increased attention.

The Hungarian bishop's letter reported that the Tatars had already come up to the river *Deinphir/Damaii*, but were unable to swim across it. They were now expected to come back and cross the river when the winter frost would lock it with ice. This detail seems to comply with the Ipatiev Chronicle report on the arrival of Mengu (Möngke) Prince's troops at Kiev

[40] A. Zsoldos, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1000–1301*, Budapest, 2011, p. 96. See also, A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Cardinali di curia e 'familiae' cardinalizie. Dal 1227 al 1254*, Padova, 1972 (Italia sacra, vols 18–19), vol. 1, pp. 349–57; P. Tusor, *Purpura Pannonica: az esztergomi 'bíborosi szék' kialakulásának előzményei a 17. században*, Budapest and Rome, 2005 (Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae, Classis 1, vol. 3), pp. 43, 316.

[41] See Fr. Palacký, *Der Mongolen-Einfall im Jahre 1241. Eine kritische Zusammenstellung und Sichtung aller darüber vorhandenen Quellennachrichten*, Prague, 1842, p. 379; Erben, 'Regesta', p. 723; Z. Gombocz, 'A magyar őshaza és a nemzeti hagyomány (II.)', *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, 46, 1923, 1, pp. 1–33 (p. 22); Bezzola, *Die Mongolen*, p. 54; Klopprogge, *Ursprung*, p. 163; J. Szabó, *A tatárjárás. A mongol hódítás és Magyarország*, Budapest, 2007, pp. 112–13.

[42] Hrushevs'ky, *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, vol. 2, p. 250, n. 3.

[43] See Bezzola, *Die Mongolen*, p. 54; Klopprogge, *Ursprung*, p. 163; J. Giessauf, *Barbaren – Monster – Gottesgeißeln. Steppennomaden im europäischen Spiegel der Spätantike und des Mittelalters*, Graz, 2006, p. 153; Szabó, *A tatárjárás*, p. 112.

before the capture of the city by Batu Khan. The Novgorod chronicles and later sources enter Mengu's arrival at Kiev under the year 6748 (1240).[44] In our opinion, it is possible that this event occurred in autumn 1239.[45] Unable to cross the flowing waters of the Danube, Mengu limited himself to observing Kiev from the opposite bank of the Dnieper.[46]

Another very characteristic detail proves the trustworthiness of the news conveyed by the Hungarian correspondent to Paris. The author describes the appearance of the Tatars on the eastern bank of the Dnieper as their coming 'as far as the Hungarian border'. This view undoubtedly reflects how the Hungarian court understood the political structure of Eastern Europe before the Mongol invasion. From the early thirteenth century, Hungarian kings, whose sons and brothers ruled in Halych at various times, officially titled themselves 'the kings of Galicia and Lodomeria' (*rex Galicie et Lodomerie*). In particular, this was the title of Béla IV and his father Andrew II.[47]

At the same time, Daniel of Galicia, who was brought up at the Hungarian court, had recognized his vassalage to King Béla IV since he was a child. This follows from the description of the coronation of Béla IV by the archbishop of Esztergom in Székesfehérvár on 14 October 1235, contained in the Hungarian Chronicle Composition of the fourteenth century. During the coronation procession, 'Daniel, the true Rusian prince, with all due respectfulness, led the [royal] horse ahead'.[48] Daniel's behaviour is reminiscent of the 'Office of the Groom' (Officium Stratoris) — a ceremonial ritual which was widespread in medieval Europe and symbolized vassal obedience.[49] The vassalage to the Hungarian king can be traced back to the policies of the Galician-Volhynian prince over the entire period from the late 1230s to the early 1240s.[50]

[44] *Sofiiskaia Pervaia letopis´*, col. 301; *Moskovskii letopisnyi svod kontsa XV veka*, pp. 130–31; *Suprasl´skaia letopis´* (1980), pp. 25–26, 43–44, and *passim*.

[45] See A. V. Maiorov, 'Povest´ o nashestvii Batyja v Ipat´evskoj letopisi. Chast´ pervaja', *Rossica antiqua*, 2012, nr. 1, pp. 76–80. See also, Maiorov A. V., 'Daniil Galitskii i "prints Tartar" nakanune nashestviia Batyia na Iushnuiu Rus´', *Rusin*, 2013, nr. 1, pp. 53–77.

[46] *Ipat´evskaia letopis´* (Hypatian Chronicle), ed. A. A. Shakhmatov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, Moscow, 1998, vol. 2, col. 782.

[47] See *Regesta Regum Stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica*, ed. E. Szentpétery, Budapest, 1923, vol. 1/1, p. 94, nr. 290; p. 105, nr. 320; p. 111, nr. 337; vol. 1/2, p. 254, nr. 841; pp. 315–16, nr. 1021.

[48] *Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*, ed. A. Domanovszky, in *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, ed. E. Szentpétery, Budapest, 1937, vol. 1, p. 467.

[49] M. Labunka, 'Officium Stratoris Principis Galiciae et Lodomeriae Danielis Romanovych', *Palaeoslavica*, 2002, vol. 10, pp. 222–25.

[50] See A. V. Maiorov, 'Vneshniaia politika Daniila Romanovicha v seredine 1230-kh

It was not until late 1239 or, more likely, early 1240 that Daniel Romanovich established his power in Kiev and left *tysiatsky* (captain of the thousand) Dmitr as his viceroy in the city. The Hungarian bishop's letter to Paris, therefore, most likely described the situation that existed around Kiev after Daniel had taken power and before the winter of 1240/41.

Both the Dnieper and the Danube appear to have been insurmountable obstacles for the Mongols. To cross them, the invaders had to wait until hard winter frost would lock the rivers and thus halted their advance.

The letter to all Christians sent by the Benedictine Abbey of St Mary in 'Ruszia',[51] cited by Matthew of Paris, reported that the main Mongolian forces had crossed the Danube after Christmas: 'When at Christmas the Danube had frozen over, their great force got across to the other bank of the river.'[52] The letter is dated 4 January 1242 which means that the crossing must have taken place between 25 December 1241 and the letter date.

If in the early 1240s the Danube froze over in late December, the Dnieper, further north in its middle course, must have frozen earlier.

Many years of observations from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries showed that the mid-Dnieper near Kiev usually began to freeze over in the second week of November. The river would not have frozen up, therefore, until early December.[53] No reliable climatic data exist that can be applied to the mid-thirteenth century, however. One can only assume that the climate in Europe used to be more severe at that time and the mid-Dnieper froze over sooner,[54] but it is unlikely to have been more than one or two weeks earlier.

godov', in *Kniazha doba. Istoriia i kul'tura,* ed. Ia. Isaevich, L'viv, 2008, vol. 2, pp. 50–57.

[51] Researchers have expressed a reasonable assumption that the St Mary's Abbey was an Irish monastery in Kiev and that the monks in 1241 fled to Ireland, conveying on the way news of the Tatar attack. See W. Abraham, *Powstanie organizacji kościoła łacińskiego na Rusi*, L'viv, 1904, vol. 1, pp. 69–70; M. E. Shaitan, 'Germaniia i Kiev v XI veke', in *Letopis´ zaniatii postoianoi Istoriko-Arkheograficheskoi komissii (za 1926 god)*, Leningrad, 1927, vol. 1 (34), pp. 3–26 (pp. 24–25); H. Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster. Irische Benediktinerkonvente im hochmittelalterlichen Deutschland*, Paderborn, 1995, pp. 276, 337; M. Osterrieder, 'Kulturverbindungen zwischen Regensburg und Kiev (10.–13. Jahrhundert) und die Rolle der Iren', in H. Beyer-Thoma (ed.), *Bayern und Osteuropa: aus der Geschichte der Beziehungen Bayerns, Frankens und Schwabens mit Russland, der Ukraine und Weissrussland*, Wiesbaden, 2000, pp. 57–93 (p. 76).

[52] *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. 6. p. 79.

[53] See *Klimat Ukrainy*, eds G. F. Prihot´ko et al., Leningrad, 1967, pp. 129–30.

[54] It is believed that in the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries in Europe as a whole there was a significant deterioration in climatic conditions in comparison with the preceding and succeeding centuries ('Little Ice Age'). However, within this period, there were local climatic optima, one of which came in the second third of the thirteenth century (1232–68). See E. P. Borisenkov and V. M. Pasetsky, *Tysiacheletniaia letopis´ neobychainykh iavlenii prirody*, Moscow, 1988, pp. 500, 502.

The Ipatiev Chronicle account of the Mongol siege of Kiev contains one notable detail. When Batu's troops surrounded the city, there was a terrible noise and the besieged citizens 'could not hear each other due to the permanent grating of cartwheels, the roaring of many camels and the neighing of horses'.[55] In A. Iu. Karpov's opinion, 'this does not refer to usual vehicles but to the Mongols' so-called "big carts" that carried their spacious homes — *yurts* — and the siege artillery — trebuchets, catapults, battering rams, etc. These huge structures left a lasting impression on everyone who saw them'.[56] Karpov cites the Franciscan monk, William of Rubruck, who stayed with the Mongols and measured the width between the wheel traces of one of these carts. It spanned twenty feet (about 6.5 metres). The dwelling on the cart protruded beyond the wheels by five feet on both sides. Twenty-two oxen pulled the cart, whose axle was of the size of a ship mast.[57]

Many nomadic people of Central Asia — the Xiongnu, the Xianbei, the Juan-Juan, the Turks, the Uyghurs, the Khitan people — had dwellings on carts. Nomad tents on wheels are mentioned in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Set on uni-, bi-, tri- or tetra-axial carts, mobile dwellings were driven by oxen or camels. Those wagons, called *ger-tereg* (yurts on carts), formed 'nomadic towns', encountered by the European travellers Plano Carpini, Rubruck and Marco Polo.[58] Of course, not all Mongolian dwellings were of the enormous size reported by Rubruck. Plano Carpini saw much smaller mobile homes pulled by a single ox: 'To move a smaller [dwelling] on a cart, one ox is sufficient; larger ones require three, four and even more, in accordance with the size of a cart; and wherever they go, to war or elsewhere, they always bring their homes along.'[59]

In any event, it is clear that in late 1240 the Mongols came near Kiev with their mobile dwellings, which means with their possessions and families. Moreover, Batu Khan's army had heavy battering rams and trebuchets that destroyed Kiev's walls in a few days.

[55] *Ipat´evskaia letopis´*, col. 784.

[56] Karpov, *Batyi*, p. 99.

[57] *Itinera et relationes fratrum minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, ed. A. van den Wyngaert, Florence, 1929 (*Sinica Franciscana*, vol. 1), p. 191.

[58] See D. Maidar, *Pamiatniki istorii i kul´tury Mongolii*, Moscow, 1981, pp. 76, 82; Sh. B. Chimitdorzhiev, 'Goroda i zhilishcha mongolov v srednie veka i novoe vremia', in *Kul´tura Mongolii v srednie veka i novoe vremia (XVI – nachalo XX v.)*, ed. Sh. B. Chimitdorzhiev, Ulan-Ude, 1986, pp. 21–37 (p. 32).

[59] Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*, eds E. Menestò, et al., Spoleto, 1989, pp. 234–35.

One can hardly doubt that such an army could cross the Dnieper only after winter frost had set in and solid ice had covered the river. Taking into account the climatic features of the Middle Dnieper, it can be assumed that the Mongols could not arrange an ice crossing over the Dnieper near Kiev earlier than mid-November. Until then, according to the Hungarian bishop's letter, the Mongols were waiting on the opposite bank of the Dnieper.

Thus the above data prove the date of the fall of Kiev as cited in the Rostov chronicles of the third quarter of the thirteenth century, i.e. 6 December, St Nicholas's day. Since, according to the Mongolian version given by Rashid-ad-Din Hamadani, Kiev was captured in nine days, the storming of the city began on 28 November. This must have been preceded by the Mongolian troops crossing the icebound Dnieper, the siege of the city and preparations for the attack. The entire military operation near Kiev appears to have taken the Mongols less than a month. The version of the Pskov chroniclers, which appeared two centuries later, that tells of a ten-week defence of Kiev, from 5 September to 19 November, is entirely fictitious. This is likely to have been due to a tendency, characteristic of late-fifteenth-century Russian chroniclers, to reconstruct the history of the struggle against the Tatars at a time when the Golden Horde had lost its political importance.